



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

April 18, 2006

News Release

14 Cubans and 19 Chinese arrested by ICE for illegally entering the U.S.

ST. Thomas, US. Virgin Islands – A total of 33 aliens who illegally entered the United States were arrested here and in Puerto Rico by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents.

The first group arrested here today consisted of 14 Cuban nationals discovered near downtown Charlotte Amalie. Their arrest stemmed from an ICE tip received from the U.S. Virgin Island Police Department (USVIPD).

The ICE preliminary investigation revealed that the 14 illegal immigrants left Cuba on April 10, 2006. The Cuban nationals allegedly paid a human smuggler \$4,000 each for their illicit venture.

The second group of illegal aliens, consisting of 19 Chinese nationals, landed Friday on the small island of Culebra off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico. They were subsequently arrested and processed at an ICE facility in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. They were later transferred to the Metropolitan Detention Center where they will await the outcome of their cases.

“Smugglers are finding out that using the Caribbean Basin for their smuggling ventures is no longer an option,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE in Puerto Rico. “ICE will continue using its resources to halt illegal immigration to the United States through Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.”

This enforcement action was part of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a comprehensive multi-year plan launched by the Department of Homeland Security to secure America’s borders and reduce illegal migration. Under SBI, Homeland Security seeks to gain operational control of both the northern and southern borders, while re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that illegal aliens are removed from the country quickly and efficiently. SBI also involves strong interior enforcement efforts, including enhanced worksite enforcement investigations and intensified efforts to track down and remove illegal aliens inside this country.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.